

JOHN BOEHNER  
Chairman  
8th District, Ohio

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF ACQUIRING A NATIONAL BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM

On July 15, 1998, the bipartisan Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States, chaired by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, submitted its final report to Congress. The so-called "Rumsfeld Commission" concluded, among other things, that:

***"Concerted efforts by a number of overtly or potentially hostile nations to acquire ballistic missiles with biological or nuclear payloads pose a growing threat to the United States, its deployed forces and its friends and allies. These newer, developing threats in North Korea, Iran and Iraq are in addition to those still posed by the existing ballistic missile arsenals of Russia and China, nations with which we are not now in conflict but which remain in uncertain transitions. The newer ballistic missile- equipped nations' capabilities will not match those of U.S. systems for accuracy or reliability. However, they would be able to inflict major destruction on the U.S. within about five years of a decision to acquire such a capability (10 years in the case of Iraq). During several of those years, the U.S. might not be aware that such a decision had been made."***

The Rumsfeld Commission's conclusion contradicts that of a controversial 1995 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), which stated that there was no missile threat to the *continental* U.S. for fifteen years. This was the same NIE President Clinton cited when he vetoed the FY '96 Defense Authorization bill, which called for the deployment of a national missile defense system by the year 2003.

Source: *Executive Summary of the Report of the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States, July 15, 1998, Pursuant to Public Law 201 – 104<sup>th</sup> Congress*

## A Wake Up Call for All Americans

House National Security Chairman Floyd Spence, author of the legislation that created the Rumsfeld Commission (P.L. 104-201), and leading proponent of a national ballistic defense system, summarized the Commission's findings in the following statement:

***"The commission's unanimous and bipartisan conclusions indicate that both the intelligence community and policy-makers have underestimated and miscalculated the threat to the American public posed by ballistic missiles. I believe that the American people have been lulled into a false sense of security, and hope that the commission's report will send out a wake up call for all Americans. The missile threat is not 15 years away – it is here and now."***

Source: Bipartisan Commission on Ballistic Missile Threat: "Wake Up Call For All Americans", House National Security Press Release, July 15, 1998.

## Americans Favor Deployment of a Missile Defense System

The Center Security Policy, the Claremont Institute, the Free Congress Foundation and the Heritage Foundation commissioned *the polling company* to conduct a nationwide opinion survey of 800 voters on the topic of national security, ballistic missiles and missile defense systems. This survey was fielded July 26 – July 29, 1998 with a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) phone facility and has a margin of error of 3.5% at the 95% confidence level. Here is just a sampling of the key results:

- ◆ **"Only 27% of Americans correctly answer that the U.S. military could not destroy a ballistic missile fired at the United States."**
- ◆ **"78% of the electorate were 'surprised' (45%), 'shocked and angry' (19%), or 'skeptical' (14%) of government documents that indicate that the U.S. military cannot destroy even a single incoming missile."**
- ◆ **"86% favor the deployment of a missile defense system."**
- ◆ **"75% are willing to spend \$3 billion on a missile defense system."**
- ◆ **"71% favor deployment even if terrorists or hostile governments could attack the United States with weapons such as suitcase bombs that could be smuggled into the country."**
- ◆ **"When informed about the findings of the panel led by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, 65% of voters believe that the government should deploy missile defenses within six years."**

Source: *the polling company*, Survey Research Analysis, July 29, 1998, [www.pollingcompany.com](http://www.pollingcompany.com)

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